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DoD tests next -generation anti-ship missile

U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Rene Ayala, 7th Maintenance Group load standardization crew member, maneuvers a Long Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM) in preparation for an upcoming test flight Feb. 2 at Dyess Air Force Base, Texas. The Navy, Air Force and Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) completed the test Feb. 4, successfully launching the LRASM from an Air Force B-1 Bomber. (U.S. Air Force photo)

POINT MUGU SEA TEST RANGE, Calif. – The Navy, Air Force and Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) completed a successful test of the Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM) Feb. 4, marking a significant step in maturing key technologies for the future operational weapon system.

The joint-service team, known as the LRASM Deployment Office (LDO), conducted the test to evaluate LRASM's low-altitude performance and obstacle avoidance as part of the program's accelerated development effort.

"We are very pleased with how LRASM performed today and we are looking forward to continuing integration efforts on the Air Force B-1, followed by our Navy F/A-18, over the next few years," said Capt. Jaime Engdahl, the LDO's Navy program manager. "We have a clear mission, to deliver game-changing capability to our warfighters in theater as quickly as possible."

During the flight from the Sea Test Range in Point Mugu, California, the B-1

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Bomber released the LRASM, which navigated a series of pre-planned waypoints to verify aerodynamic performance. In the final portion of the flight the missile detected, tracked and avoided an object that was deliberately placed in the flight pattern to demonstrate its obstacle avoidance algorithms.

Since completing two successful test flights in 2013, LRASM has rapidly transitioned from a DARPA demonstration to a formal, U.S. Navy program of record, with fielding set for 2018. The program reflects initiatives from DoD's Better Buying Power 3.0, which encourages rapid prototyping and other forms of innovative acquisition to keep a technological edge and achieve greater efficiency and productivity in defense spending.

"We've shown that by taking advantage of the Defense Department's evolving acquisition policy, it is possible to significantly accelerate the fielding of a high-payoff technical system for the warfighter," said Artie Mabbett, LDO director.

The LDO and industry partner Lockheed Martin are developing LRASM as an air-launched offensive anti-surface warfare weapon to counter the growing maritime threats in an Anti-Access/Area Denial (A2/AD) environment. When operational, LRASM will play a significant role in ensuring military access to operate in open ocean/blue waters and the littorals due to its enhanced ability to discriminate and conduct tactical engagements from extended ranges.

An Air Force B-1 Bomber releases a Long-Range Anti-Ship Missile (LRASM) during a test flight in 2013. (U.S. Air Force photo)